

Art in the City / Week 3

Multiple Landscapes, Louisville Project



Multiple Landscape, Louisville Project, Robert A. Howard

The enameled aluminum *Multiple Landscape, Louisville Project* is sited at the entrance of the Federal Building at 600 Martin Luther King Jr. Place. Dedicated in April 1977, the 18' sculpture was commissioned through the US General Services Administration's Art in Architecture Program established in the 1960s to commission public art for federal buildings. The GSA program integrates fine art with public buildings to enhance civic value and create a lasting cultural legacy. Howard would have been selected for the commission as a contemporary American artist producing critically acclaimed work of his era, and for his ability to collaborate with a design team to assimilate his artwork with the federal architecture. The paperboard Maquette Howard built to secure the commission for *Multiple Landscape, Louisville Project* is now in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

How does the US government commission art? GSA reserves .5% of construction costs for new federal buildings to commission public art. The GSA Art in Architecture web page explains: "Artists who receive federal commissions work with the project architects and others as members of a design team to ensure that the artworks are meaningfully integrated into the overall project. All artist candidates for Art in Architecture commissions are drawn from GSA's National Artist Registry, which is a database of artists who have submitted images of their past work for review by GSA panels. The registry is open to all American artists."

Completed in 1969, Louisville's Federal Building (aka Romano L. Mazzoli Federal Building) was designed by a team of architectural and engineering firms including Louis & Henry and Thomas J. Nolan & Sons. The Brutalist building's concrete structure is typical of mid-century government and institutional architecture.

Howard was born in Sapulpa, Oklahoma in 1922 and studied at Phillips University, University of Tulsa and then with Russian sculptor Ossip Zadkine in Paris, France. As a sculptor and educator, he taught from 1951 to 1988 at UNC-Chapel Hill and University of Southern California and his work was exhibited and collected nationwide, from Los Angeles County Museum of Art to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to the Royal Marks Gallery in New York. Howard worked primarily in welded steel and fiberglass.

Multiple Landscape, Louisville Project is worth a short walk from nearby downtown sites. There is a small park along Chestnut Street, between 6th and 7th Streets, across Martin Luther King Jr. Place from the Federal Building. Looking forward to a spring picnic, anyone?

[Sarah Lindgren]